

Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person

Quarter 1 – Module 2: Intersubjectivity

Lesson

1

Intersubjectivity



What's In

In the parable, it is hard to imagine that a Samaritan would help a Jew since he is considered by the Jewish society as an outcast. But what happened was the other way around – he helped the Jew despite of their differences and the unfair treatment to him. This story clearly explains how man can go beyond cultural considerations and how one can overcome grudges to performing an ethical act towards a needy person.

It may be considered as unusual phenomenon in the present social realm but the story tells us it is never impossible. Like the Good Samaritan, you may have encounter strangers who need help. If there is/are any incident/s you helped somebody unknown to you, please narrate your experience/s below. Tell how you overcame your fear of strangers and what made you decide to help the person/s. But if you don't have any experience, tell us what you would do if you encounter one and why would you help them.



What is It

What Philosophers Say About Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity is universal. It exists when and where humans exist. It is an undeniable reality which thinkers could not help but discuss. Here are some philosophers who took philosophical inquiry on intersubjectivity:

1. Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) – one of the main ideas of Confucianism is Ren or “human-heartedness.” It is a virtue central to man that can be found in his sociality or intersubjectivity. In his philosophy, Confucius stresses order and harmony in the world. His aims can be achieved through practical, concrete, particular, and perceptual ways. This means Confucian thinking on intersubjectivity is practical humanism. There is an emphasis on human actions in sociality. He calls every man to love the other through actions, not through thoughts.

2. Martin Buber (1878-1965) – is a Jewish philosopher who introduced the “I-Thou” and “I-It” relationships to embody his philosophy of intersubjectivity. For Buber, we have to treat another person as a subject (a being different from things or objects). Persons are not inanimate objects to be used. They have their own mind and free will, thus, we have to respect others as we respect ourselves. “I” refers to the self and “Thou” or “You” refers to others. This “I-Thou” relationship is the most meaningful relationship in the realm of humanity. The “I” is the same with the “Thou” and there should be mutual relationship between them. We can only recognize the self in the context of the other. This is a “person-to-person” relationship, “subject-to-subject” relation. We need to accept, respect, be sincere, and have dialogue with the other.

3. Karol Wojtyla (1920-2005) – He is also St. John Paul II but as a philosopher, we use his real name. For Wojtyla, human action is the foundation of our being. But human reality is also about being with others, so our actions are also directed towards others. This form of action is now called “Participation.” In the theory of participation, man has the capacity to share himself to others. This affirms the reality that man acts and exists with others. He is a member of the community of persons, a community of “I-You” or “We.” Since man is a member of this community, his experience with others gives him meaning and allows him to create meaning with others.